



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Forest Ranger Injured While Fighting Wildfire** ***Debris burning on construction site causes wildfire to spread***

**FRANKFORT, Ky. – (Sept. 8, 2010)** – A wildland firefighter was injured Tuesday morning while working Scotts Chapel Road Fire—a 12-acre wildfire in Livingston County. Don Lam, Forest Ranger Technician for the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF), is currently in serious condition at Deaconess Hospital in Evansville after being airlifted following the accident. Preliminary investigations report that Lam was struck from a rolling log—a burning snag approximately 10 ft in length that broke loose and rolled off a bluff. The impact has left Lam unconscious and with serious injuries including second degree burns.

“Our employees face extreme risk when responding to wildfires such as this one,” said Leah MacSwords, director for the Kentucky Division of Forestry. “We are very concerned about Don’s condition and we will be investigating the incident and pursuing enforcement options in an effort to prevent future accidents from occurring. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Don and his family.”

The wildfire spread from a burning debris pile on a construction site owned by River Oaks Timberland Management. The site is currently being cleared for development by FCE Construction and Excavation. The burn pile, compounded with hot, dry and windy conditions resulted in an escaped wildfire burning approximately 12 acres of adjacent woods. The wildfire continues to burn today as forestry officials consider further actions to take in order to contain the fire. Livingston County has had a burn ban in effect intermittently since Aug. 9 and is currently experiencing Level 1

drought conditions. It is not certain at this time whether the burn ban was in effect when the wildfire began. In light of a possible burn ban violation and letting the fire escape, forestry officials will pursue enforcement action against the responsible party and seek suppression costs for containing the fire.

Although fall forest fire season officially begins Oct. 1, forestry officials would like to remind citizens that recent drought conditions should not be underestimated and that the potential for wildfire can occur any time of year. Officials recommend citizens to be aware of all outdoor burning laws, to take extreme caution while burning woody debris and to avoid burning on hot, dry, windy days.

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